

FORT BENNING, BUILDING NO. 296
(Hunt Club, Recreation Building)
Hunt Club, Marne Road
Fort Benning Military Reservation
Chattahoochee
Georgia

HABS GA-2392-A
GA-2392-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORT BENNING, BUILDING No. 296
(Hunt Club, Recreation Building)

HABS No. GA-2392-A

Location: Building No. 296 (Recreation Building) is located on Hunt Club off Marne Road, Main Post, Fort Benning, Georgia

UTM 16.693207.3583337

Date of Construction: 1937

Fabricator: Unknown

Present Owner: United States Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning Military Reservation, Georgia

Original Use: NCO Quarters

Present Use: Offices of the Hunt Club, property is on land leased to the Hunt Club by Fort Benning

Significance: Building No. 296 is individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a good example of a vernacular style bungalow building with elements of Craftsman features. The residence is also eligible under Criterion A for its association with the development of recreation at Fort Benning.

Previous Investigations

Building No. 296 is a historic architectural property located north of the Main Post of Fort Benning, and it is not a contributing element to the Main Post Cantonment Historic District. The structure was recommended individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a good example of residential building with elements of Craftsman features; the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the recommendation.¹ The Georgia SHPO also determined that the building was eligible under Criterion A.² In 2005, Panamerican Consultants, Inc., prepared a treatment plan for Building No. 296 as part of a plan addressing the care and maintenance of many buildings and structures on post.³

Background:

This background history provides a brief discussion of the development of Fort Benning from its establishment to World War II. This will provide a glimpse at the major forces influencing development of the post. Next will be a brief discussion of the importance of Cavalry and Horses in the Army during the early twentieth century. Finally there is a short discussion of the rise of the recreation as an important tool in the soldiers' lives. These short historic contexts will place Building No. 296 within the context of post development and the creation of recreational facilities, including the Hunt Club. Building No. 296 does not currently play a role in the operation of the Hunt Club, however, the building previously served as an administration office for the club. Several other sources provide a thorough history of the development of the post.⁴

¹The Jaeger Company and Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc., *1997 Fort Benning Historic Resource Survey Update*. Volume One: Survey Report. Prepared for U.S. Army Infantry Center, Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Management Division, Fort Benning, GA (Gainesville, GA and Ellerslie, GA: The Jaeger Company and Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants, Inc., 1997), 82.

² Letter from Georgia State Historic Preservation Office to Fort Benning, 2005. On file, at the DPW-EMD-CRM, Fort Benning, Georgia.

³ Stacey L. Griffin, Kelly Nolte, Jeanette Knowles, and Christine M. Longiaru, *Surveys and Treatment Plans for the Historic Properties Component. Fort Benning Military Reservation, Building 296*. Prepared for Environmental Programs Management Branch, Directorate of Public Works, Fort Benning Military Reservation, Georgia (Tuscaloosa, AL: Panamerican Consultants, Inc., Architectural History Division, 2005).

⁴For a complete history of Fort Benning see Peggy A. Stelpflug, and Richard Hyatt, *Home of the Infantry The History of Fort Benning* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007); Robert. Holcombe, *An Outline History of Fort Benning, Georgia, and the Infantry School Concept* (Fort Benning, GA: National Infantry Museum, 1990); Advertiser Company, *The History of Fort Benning Diamond Jubilee, 1918-1993* (Columbus, GA: Advertiser Co, 1994); and Kenneth H. Thomas, *Fort Benning*. Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003).

History of Fort Benning from Establishment to World War II

Fort Benning, the primary training center for the U.S. Army's Infantry and home to Airborne and Ranger training, is located south of Columbus, in western Georgia. The post was named for Confederate General Henry Lewis Benning, who was from Columbus. The War Department established Camp Benning in October 1918 as a training base for forces during World War I. One of the main training programs at Benning was for the Infantry. The Infantry School traces its history back to the School of Musketry that was established at the Presidio of Monterey, California in 1907. In 1913, the War Department moved the school to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, along with the Artillery School. During World War I, training facilities required additional expansion to accommodate the increased numbers of troops. Unlike other installations, Benning remained open between the wars; it received permanent status after World War I.⁵ The Army moved the U.S. Army Infantry School to a temporary camp on leased land near Columbus, Georgia, in 1918.⁶

After the end of World War I, troop strength and appropriations were reduced dramatically across both the entire Army and Camp Benning.⁷ When the Army purchased the former Bussey plantation, Riverside, in 1919, the main cantonment was relocated to its present location south of Upatoi Creek. During the move, the Army began construction on semi-permanent buildings to accommodate the school's population, including barracks, classrooms, bakery, laundry, post exchange, headquarters, hospital, warehouses, utilities, and rail lines, but construction was halted several times while the Army considered closing the camp.⁸

Because of its importance to training, Camp Benning again survived the round of base closures that occurred in the early 1920s, and in 1922 Fort Benning became a permanent military installation by War Department order. Architectural historians suggest that the development of Fort Benning reflects the changes in permanent Army design during the 1920s and 1930s. In

⁵ Deborah K. Cannan, Leo Hirrel, Katherine E. Grandine, Kathryn M. Kuranda, Bethany M. Usher, Hugh B. McAloon, and Martha R. Williams, *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790–1940*, Volume III. Prepared for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (Frederick, Maryland: R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Inc., 1995), 29.

⁶ During World War I, Army leaders realized that infantry officers and NCOs needed specialized training. The Army established the Infantry Board and later the Infantry School partly to instruct the officers in machine gun tactics, the use of mortars, and other new tactics. This was a dramatic change from earlier thought that placed the infantry at the bottom of the training ladder. For more information on the professional development of Army officers in the inter-war period, see Geoffrey Perrett, *There's A War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991). 7-8.

⁷ For a discussion of the general history of the U.S. Army during the inter-war years, see Maurice Matloff, General Editor, *American Military History* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1973), 405-417.

⁸ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume III, 29.

1924, Brigadier General Briant H. Wells prepared a formal document, which became known as the Wells Plan, for permanent construction, emphasizing the importance of the outdoor environment of the post. Wells envisioned pleasant landscaping in the developed areas. This was an important first step in creating the campus-like environment that characterizes Fort Benning today.⁹ Additionally, the plan advocated the use of Dutch Colonial Revival architecture and featured brick and stuccoed construction with steep roofs. However, national architectural and planning trends would soon reach the post.

Meanwhile, the military struggled with a nationwide military housing shortage. Approximately one-third of Army personnel in the continental United States lived in temporary structures built in 1917; the living conditions at Fort Benning fit this description. In 1926, the U.S. Congress enacted Public Law No. 45, authorizing the Secretary of War to dispose of forty-three military installations and to deposit the money received from sales into a special fund designated the Military Post Construction Fund used to construct housing and hospitals. In 1927, the first monies were expended, and Fort Benning was one of the recipients. Also at this time, the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, which was responsible for the design and construction at Army facilities, developed new standardized building plans and used Spanish Colonial Revival style for installations in the South, Western plains, Southwest, and California.¹⁰

Construction at Fort Benning continued during the New Deal (1933-1940). Work relief money, channeled through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) and supervised by the Army, resulted in construction of several important buildings and areas on post. Prominent city planner George B. Ford designed the new plan for Fort Benning. Several important U.S. cities and military bases laid out in the early twentieth century had elements of the City Beautiful and Garden City movements; Fort Benning's built environment was also influenced by these movements.¹¹ George B. Ford, who worked on many of the Army cantonments such as Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Sam Houston, Texas,

⁹ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume III, 29; Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton, *Fort Benning: The Land and the People* (Tallahassee, FL: Southeast Archeological Center, National Park Service, 1989).

¹⁰ Howard B. Nurse, "The Planning of Army Posts," *The Quartermaster Review* (September-October 1928, 15); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings, *Context Study of the United States Quartermaster General Standardized Plans, 1866-1942*. Prepared for U.S. Army Environmental Center (Seattle, WA: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings, 1997), 48.

¹¹ For a description of the movement and its effects on urban planning, see William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). For a discussion of the Garden City movement that grew out of the City Beautiful movement see Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and David Barry Cady, *The Influence of the Garden City Ideal on American Housing and Planning Reform, 1900-1940* (Thesis (Ph. D., University of Wisconsin, 1970).

“recommended architectural continuity within residential neighborhoods, at the same time warning against the monotony of subdivisions. Ford advocated the use of curvilinear streets, open spaces for playgrounds, large avenues and streets, and abundant planting.”¹²

The War Department retained Ford as a consultant for the new posts built with the Military Post Construction Fund. His planning concepts are evident in his plan for the new post. Ford incorporated the existing permanent building with a master plan based on concepts used in the City Beautiful and Garden City movements. Housing remained grouped along curving streets. Ford introduced strong visual axes between the commanding officers’ quarters and the new headquarters building, as well as between various administration buildings. The new buildings constructed during the 1930s reflected the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural tradition and featured stuccoed exteriors and red-clay tile roofs. Other installations of this era that used the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style include Fort Mason, Fort Bragg, Pope Air Force Base, Presidio of San Francisco, Fort Sam Houston, Fort Bliss, Fort Sill, Maxwell Air Force Base, and Randolph Air Force Base.¹³

The growth of Fort Benning during the 1930s was propelled by the expansion of the Infantry School and the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Historians note that other schools and missions came to Fort Benning. In 1932, the U.S. Army’s Tank School was transferred from Fort Meade to Fort Benning. The continued reliance on animal transport is evident in a new stable and veterinary complex that was constructed during the 1930s.¹⁴

¹² U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings, *Context Study of the United States Quartermaster General Standardized Plans, 1866-1942*, 55.

¹³ Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton, *Fort Benning: The Land and the People*, 175-178; Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790–1940*, Volume II, 29.

¹⁴ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume I, 30.

The Importance of Cavalry and Horses in the Army

Since its establishment, the U.S. Army has had an important connection with the cavalry.¹⁵ During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Quartermaster Corps constructed stables to house horses or mules at Army posts associated with the cavalry and artillery. It is important to note that the stables for different branches were located in distinct areas of the post. As the Army consolidated into larger, permanent posts during the 1880s and 1890s, the cavalry and artillery units required larger stable complexes. When planning and designing the new posts, the Quartermaster Department incorporated cavalry and artillery stables as part of the design and overall plan for new installations until World War I.¹⁶

Even after the carnage of World War I, the Army continued to build cavalry stable complexes during the 1930s, and it retained its horse cavalry until 1947 and its horse-drawn artillery until the eve of World War II. However, the number of stables decreased dramatically between World Wars I and II as motorized vehicles gradually replaced horses. Although mechanization eventually replaced the horse, historians have argued that the cavalry and horses remained an integral part of Army culture. While it served no tactical advantage, the Army required officers to practice their equestrian skills. Military schools retained stables during the 1930s, and the curriculum of the Air Service Tactical School included 25 hours of instruction in stable management until 1923.¹⁷ Many times the stables became recreational areas, especially for officers who had received training with horses earlier in their careers and continued to see that distinction as important. As further evidence of this emphasis, the US Military Academy continued training cadets to use horses until World War II.

Rise of Recreation at Army Posts

As the military expanded in the early twentieth century, Army commanders saw the need to improve the living conditions on its posts. Using the ideas of the Progressive Movement (1900-1920), the Army began to care about the health, morale, and well-being of troops in much the same way that companies were caring for their workers. One of the Army's early ways to improve soldiers' lives was the construction of recreational facilities as part of its building program. The most popular type was the athletic facility, which usually had another function, such as serving as

¹⁵ For a discussion of the US Army cavalry horse, see William H. Carter, *U.S. Cavalry Horse*. (Guilford, Conn: Lyons Press, 2003). Other historians have explored the change from horse cavalry to mechanized cavalry. For discussion of that change in military doctrine, see George F. Hofmann, *Through Mobility We Conquer The Mechanization of U.S. Cavalry*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); and Lucian King Truscott, and Lucian K. Truscott. *The Twilight of the U.S. Cavalry Life in the Old Army, 1917-1942*. Modern war studies. (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

¹⁶ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume I, 479.

¹⁷ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume II, 479.

the post exchange. Architectural historians state that the Quartermaster Department issued standard plans for gymnasiums and exchanges. However, these facilities were not seen as so important that they received much outside funding. For example, the 1904 Quartermaster regulations stated that "post exchanges, gymnasiums, bowling alleys, and other places of amusement" must be constructed only with materials at hand, and must incur no cost to the government.¹⁸ This resulted many times in the recreational facilities being a hodge-podge of buildings.

During the 1920s, the Army received few funds for new construction, and recreational facilities were funded through private means. At Fort Benning, the Secretary of War authorized the establishment of a Recreational Center Board that raised funds and oversaw the planning and construction of athletic and recreational facilities, including the Doughboy Stadium, outdoor playing fields, and a swimming pool. Again, the type, design, and size of athletic facilities at posts during the 1930s followed no standardized plans and varied from installation to installation.¹⁹ One likely reason that Building No. 296 is not a standard plan is its construction during the 1930s, when Army personnel used local building plans and techniques.

Although the historians could find very few records related to the Hunt Club, it appears that it was part of the Army's retention of horses as part of its culture. The U.S. Army Infantry Museum has many photographs showing horse shows, horse jumping competitions, and other equestrian activities on the post during the 1930s. However, these records do not show the buildings at the Hunt Club; nor did they provide a history of the club.

Construction of Building No. 296

The Project Historian could not locate many records related to Building No. 296 during archival research; therefore, the history of the construction and use of the building is sparse. The 1944 Real Property Card lists the function of the house as a "Range House—Game Farm behind Hospital." According to Frank Hanner, Director of the National Infantry Museum, range houses were used by soldiers and their families in the early twentieth century at many military bases. One of the soldier's jobs in the early years was to ride, or range, all over Camp/Fort Benning making sure no one was trespassing on government property. Some of the houses were old farmhouses that were left abandoned when the land was purchased by the Army.²⁰ This means that the soldiers who occupied Building No. 296 probably oversaw the area around the game farm and made sure there were no trespassers.

¹⁸ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume II, 239.

¹⁹ Cannan et al., *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940*, Volume II, 239.

²⁰ Z. Frank Hanner, "Request for help," e-mail, 20 March 2007.

While many of the range houses were former farmhouses, this does not seem to be the case with Building No. 296. According to the Real Property records, construction on the building was completed on May 1, 1937 at a cost of \$1,814.37. While most of the buildings at Fort Benning from the 1930s were constructed using standard Quartermaster Corps plans, the Real Property card indicates that Building No. 296 was built using a local plan.²¹ This means that the construction plan was not a Quartermaster standardized plan, but based on local building materials and techniques. This explains why Building No. 296 is similar to the Bungalow form, and not to other housing on post.

At some unknown date, Building No. 296 was converted to Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) quarters. We can assume from the records that the change in its function to NCO quarters probably happened in the 1940s or 1950s. Records do not indicate why it changed functions from a range house to NCO quarters. On April 29, 1960, the Army converted Building No. 296 from housing to a recreational-type building and released the building to the Hunt Club, a private organization that operated at Fort Benning.²² It remained leased to the Hunt Club until the present. During field investigations, the Project Historian observed that the building was being used as offices and storage.

Building No. 296 is a bungalow house that is common in rural areas of Georgia. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office states that bungalows in the state are usually long and low tier irregular footprints, but usually in a rectangular form. They have integral porches with low-pitched roofs with overhangs. The bungalow was a popular house type in Georgia from 1900 to 1930, but the style remained popular in the rural areas for longer periods. Usually a bungalow is grouped by its roof type: front gable, side gable, hip and cross gable. The front gable was the most prevalent type in Georgia.²³

Description of Building No. 296:

Building No. 296 is a one-story, hipped-roof bungalow with a gabled roof porch at the front façade, and a hipped-roof porch at the rear. The house is clad in clapboard siding. It was built in approximately 1937 and features an asymmetrical three-bay façade with a central entrance. The building is square shaped, with 913 square feet of interior space. The hipped roof is covered by composition/asphalt shingles and has open eaves and exposed rafter ends. A single brick chimney rises from the center of the ridge line immediately behind the front section of the house. The building and the entry porch sit on a brick-pier foundation. The main façade of the

²¹ Fort Benning Real Property records, Building 296. On file at the Real Property Office, Fort Benning, Georgia.

²² Fort Benning Real Property records, Building 296. On file at the Real Property Office, Fort Benning, Georgia.

²³ Historic Preservation Division, *House Types in Georgia* (Atlanta: Historic Preservation Division, n.d.), 10.

house has four, six-over-six double-hung wood-frame windows. The side elevations have two six-over-six double-hung wood-frame windows and one three-over-three double-hung wood-frame window. The rear façade has one six-over-six and one three-over-three double-hung wood-frame window.

The main façade has a gabled roof porch with wooden posts and brick piers. The front entry porch has a pedimented gable roof with vent in the gable. The building also has a partial rear porch with hipped roof.

The interior of the house is relatively unchanged, with the exception of a remodeled bathroom and electrical upgrades from the earlier knob-tube wiring, visible in the attic space. The house is a hall-and-parlor layout with three rooms on each side of the hall. The house has six rooms, one hall, and two porches. The two rear rooms still have wooden mantels and brick fireboxes, but the other fireboxes all have been covered for use with gas-powered heating stoves, which provide heat for the building. The original trim and bead board interior walls remain.

Since its construction, Building No. 296 has undergone some basic changes. For example, in 1951, the building and floors were painted. The Army painted the building again in 1966, at a cost of \$125. The next year, they replaced the roof for \$344.12. The Real Property records indicate no other alterations to the building.

Sources Consulted

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Project Information:

In March 2007, Shaw Infrastructure, Inc. (Shaw) contracted with Brockington and Associates, Inc., to prepare Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Level I Documentation of Building No. 296 and provide the documentation to Shaw, Fort Benning's Environmental Programs Management Branch, the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the

National Park Service (NPS), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other interested parties as required under the National Historic Preservation Act. Fort Benning proposes to demolish Building No. 296 because it is in disrepair. It has been determined that it is more cost efficient to demolish the building than to rehabilitate it. Edward G. Salo of Brockington and Associates, Inc., prepared the historical narrative and the description of Building No. 296. William Brockenbrough, also of Brockington and Associates, Inc., served as the project photographer. The historical research and written documentation was completed in 2007 and was based on fieldwork completed in March 2007.